

Anti-Slavery Office

Phil<sup>a</sup> Nov. 19<sup>th</sup>

[1857]

My dear Mrs Chapman

You have not been aware  
it seems, that pictures as well  
as books come within the purview  
of our Index Expurgatorius, and  
that any Schaeffer's great work y  
out the Christian's Comfortator has  
been mutilated by the slave-dri:  
vers which; but such is never:  
theless the fact. A prominent  
publishing house of this city, do:  
ing a large foreign trade, - Lepp  
huncott & Co. by name, late  
Lepphuncott & Grambo, have issued  
editions of the Bible, & Prayer  
Book each containing, as a  
frontispiece, Mr Schaeffer's pic  
ture attended to, with the negro  
in chains left out! You will  
remember that this was one of  
the most striking ~~figures~~ <sup>features</sup> of

the picture, as well as are quite essential to the purpose of the artist, - which was obviously to illustrate the genius of the Gospel. But the publisher knowing how to adapt his wares to his customers, has omitted this offensive figure in his editions intended for the South. In this he is said to have had the sanction, if not the advice, of a distinguished prelate in the Episcopal Church; a thing by no means incredible. For did not the American Sunday School Union expunge from its list one of its approved publications, because it contained pictures offensive to the slaveholders? And has not the Executive Committee of the American Tract Society persistently refused to issue anything reflecting even indirectly upon the slave-system



for the avowed reason that the  
 truth would object to it? If their  
 reverend clergymen "of all evangel-  
 ical denominations," who direct the  
 running of the Sunday school re-  
 vides, and manage the affairs of  
 approve such pious frauds as these  
 the Tract Society; it need not be  
 thought strange that a <sup>trick</sup> liberty of  
 the same kind should meet the  
 approbation of a High-Church Bish-  
 op. And if clerical men and  
 Bishops sanction by precept or other  
 course such expedients to prohibit  
 the favour of slaveholders, we should  
 be measured in our expressions of  
 contempt for the non-professing  
 layman who imitates their ex-  
 ample. If the conduct of Messrs  
 Lippincott & Co is, as it is pro-  
 nounced to be, an excess of mean-  
 ness, how shall we characterize  
 that of the reverend gentlemen whose  
 precedent we follow?

I understand that Mr Schaeffer is  
an acquaintance of yours. I hope  
you will find him a copy of either  
the Bible or Prayer-book, both of  
which I have forwarded to you,  
that he may see with his own  
eyes the depth of degradation, to  
which Slavery has reduced the Chris-  
tianity and morals of this country.

You ask me again to write for  
the Liberty Bell; do not think me  
insensible to the honor you do  
me if I again decline. My rea-  
sons, if I were to state them,  
which is not worth while, might  
not be entirely satisfactory to  
you, but they would at least ex-  
onerate me from all suspicion  
of undervaluing the admirable  
work to which you have devoted  
so much time and disinterest-  
ed labour. - But abstain from  
this, a compliance with your  
request, in the form in which



you deny it would be impossible  
 for want, as I understand it,  
 an account of the late slave in-  
 surrections in the south. [With  
 the "weary Knife-grinder" my re-  
 sponse must be - "A Story, God  
 bless you ~~XX~~, I have none to tell."  
 There has been no late insur-  
 rection in the south. The last that  
 occurred was that of Nat-Turner,  
 in South-hampton, Va., twenty six  
 years ago. After that the Liberator  
 was started and the anti-sla-  
 very movement <sup>took its origin</sup> ~~followed~~; since  
 which time there has been no  
 well authenticated instance of  
 slave insurrection in any part  
 of the country. Rumours of ri-  
 oting there have been, and ex-  
 ecutions, too, of alleged outlaws:  
 but when the truth has come  
 to be known, they have invaria-  
 bly <sup>proved</sup> to have been groundless alarms.

having no justification <sup>whatsoever</sup> in facts. This  
was emphatically true of the  
United Congress of last au-  
tumn. Notwithstanding the belief  
that then prevailed, and which  
still obtains among some who  
have not inquired into the matter,  
that "a wide thread plot" had been  
detected and that just in time  
to nip it in the bud, the whole  
thing has since been shown to  
have been pure romance without  
a single fact to warrant it. It  
is true that the slaves were look-  
ing forward to the election of Colonel  
Freeman <sup>an event, which if it should take place</sup> as an ~~unbroken~~ <sup>would</sup> ~~would~~  
~~one that~~ <sup>would</sup> free him or others would  
bring them deliverance. This ex-  
pectation they were warranted  
in cherishing, by the language  
used in their hearing of leading  
political orators. These men, ap-  
pealing to brotherly sympathy &  
slave holding instinct had called  
upon the people as they valued



and wonder-~~less~~. But this is no  
 part of my present purpose;  
 which is, to let you know by  
 these facts that one anti-sla-  
 very movement has crossed the  
 line; that having removed obsta-  
 cles to the flame's escape on this  
 side, it has <sup>passed</sup> ~~crossed~~ over & now  
 furnishes him with facilities on  
 the other. The heaven is working  
 even at the forth; the light is ma-  
 king its way beginning to shine  
 where ~~diminution~~ darkness ~~be-  
 fore~~ <sup>before</sup> ~~has~~ prevailed. The flame holds  
 us can't <sup>put</sup> shut it out. White &  
 black, bond & free acknowledge its  
 power; and the rage of the flame  
 holders is impotent against  
 it. Their search laws, and their  
 Lynch laws, their Harbor Insur-  
 tors & their mighty patrols, and  
 all their other expedients to  
 arrest <sup>discussion</sup> ~~us~~ & hinder "fuga-  
 cious

"  
slaves" have become utterly un-  
availing. The escapes now, as  
for the record which is before me,  
are 100 per cent more numerous  
than they were this time last  
year, and they are continually  
increasing. Other rail-roads are  
in a declining condition and  
have stopped their semi-annual  
dividends; but the Underground  
has never before done so flourishing  
a business. Its trade is undimin-  
ished by the times, and its div-  
idends are perennial.

D I rejoice in these multiplying  
escapes, not simply or mainly  
because of the individual victims  
who are thereby rescued from bond-  
age, — though this is no small  
gain to humanity — but because  
of the moral influence they thereby  
exert upon the whole slave sys-  
tem, and the evidence they afford  
of a change <sup>going on in</sup> the public sentiment.  
The tenets by which slave holding  
is held (all along our borders is  
greatly weakened by their multiply-  
ing



their human liberty to unite  
 as one man to keep Fremont  
 from throwing Presidential chain.  
 "Let him be elected" said they "and  
 the abolitionists will have every  
 thing their own way. Laws will  
 be passed for the emancipation  
 of the slaves, and the power of the  
 Federal Government will be em-  
 ployed to put them in execu-  
 tion". Hearing this and believing  
 it, it was natural that the slaves  
 should comfort each other with as-  
 surances of early deliverance. That  
 beyond this there was no ground  
 for the panic. ~~that was created.~~  
 I do not overlook the fact that  
 confessions were made of plans  
 to rise & plot to slay by many  
 poor creatures who were but  
 under the lash for the business;  
 but these confessions proved  
 nothing. They were wrong by

by force from the antislavery feeling  
who knew<sup>no</sup> other way of putting  
an end to their tortures. of all  
the unhappy creatures who were  
hung or burned, or ~~to~~ otherwise  
tormented or put to death, not  
~~one~~ was justly chargeable with the  
offence imputed to him. The slave  
holders themselves acknowledge<sup>ed</sup>  
that the whole thing had its origin  
in a groundless panic. "They were  
in great fear where no fear was."  
But they excused themselves for  
the loss of property it occasioned  
them, by the belief that it has  
inspired their bondsmen with  
a wholesome terror which will  
diminish the probability of a future  
outbreak.

of misrepresentation  
But, false as these rumors, have  
been, it cannot be said entirely  
without qualification that there  
has been no collusion of late a-  
mong the slaves, and ~~no~~ <sup>any</sup> attempt  
made on their part to throw  
off the yoke. on the contrary  
they are continually striving and



conspiring to obtain their freedom,  
and with a success two of which  
we have said the most gratifying  
proof. Flight not fight is the  
slaves' ultima ratio; and many  
there be that betake themselves to  
this last resort. From all along  
the Atlantic sea-board and from  
every part of the border States,  
they "fly as a cloud and as  
does to their windows". They come  
to us from the interior of Virginia  
& from the dismal swamps of  
North Carolina. They reach us by  
expedients the most ingenious, &  
through sufferings which nothing  
but the hope of liberty could make  
endurable. Exactly fifty - men,  
women & children - have passed  
through the hands of our vigi-  
lance Committee in the last  
fortnight! Five of them came by  
sea in an open skiff, doubt:

ling caves on the rocks of which  
many a French bark has  
foundered! one of the fifty came  
from Alabama, travelling night  
after night as opportunity of-  
fered, in the top of a rail-road  
car! a woman came to us last  
summer from a farther port  
packed in a travelling trunk!  
I find you beneath a photographic  
likeness of this heroine, presenting  
her as she appeared when the  
trunk was opened.. I will not  
multiply instances; but I could  
tell you of hair-breadth escapes  
by flood & fire; of perils by sea,  
and perils by land, and perils  
among false brethren; - escapes  
achieved & perils bravely incurred  
by these brave men and  
women compared with which  
all <sup>adventures</sup> fictions would be  
acknowledged by you to be tame



flights. Herman chatted, even  
 when but partially enlightened  
 constitute a very uncertain  
 sort of possession. The "rich" of  
 the slaveholders, "make themselves  
legs & fly away". Then the pub.  
 the minion of the north used to  
 obstruct the passage of these esca-  
 ping slaves. It is not so now.  
 Slave law or no slave law, no  
 active hindrance is opposed to  
 their flight. The labours of the abso-  
 lutists have made this law of  
 none effect. The same is in a  
 measure true of the south. The  
 slaves who escape from the  
 south are aided by free men, &  
 free white men. And out of them  
 of all who come to us, are  
 brought or aided hither by  
 free men. There are facts  
 which are full of horror. They  
 denote that the good time which

moving toward us with  
is coming in <sup>an</sup> accelerated ~~to~~  
speed. and although it would  
hardly be safe to fix a day  
for its arrival, the author  
of the "In bending cross of the  
South" ~~may not~~ be much out  
of the way when he <sup>intimates</sup> says that  
the Centennial Anniversary of  
American Independence will  
find every slave in the land  
disenthralled.

Anti-Slavery Office ~~your friend~~  
Philadelphia.

Ever truly  
November 19<sup>th</sup>

~~Wm. L. Chapin~~  
" "